

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative, how it promotes high student achievement and how it can be replicated.

"A School Full of Readers" is a library outreach umbrella program with one simple objective: to promote reading among our middle school student body and staff. A series of programs designed to bring people into the media center was developed.

Read Around the Building takes a much-used idea and gives it a new twist. Many schools use paper cut-outs of various objects for students and staff to fill out for each book they read, hang these in the halls, until every hall is filled with "books read." We took that idea and made it more exciting. Each year we kick off our project with a theme. Our cutouts relate to our theme, we have activities to get us started, and we keep everyone posted as to our progress with daily announcements. Last year, our theme was Dr. Seuss. Our cutouts were cat hats, we had large cutouts of Seuss characters in the halls, and we celebrated with a green eggs and ham breakfast. This year our theme is "I Never Saw Another Butterfly," from a Holocaust book of the same name. Each student will be given the name of a child who died in the Holocaust, along with the child's birthplace and age at death. Our children will read books "for" those children who could not read them. Cutouts will be butterflies, and we will have a Holocaust expert speak when we finish. Other themes have included feathers in memory of a teacher who died unexpectedly, and loved feathers, boats for "Sail Away With Books," among others.

Family Reading Night is a yearly event on National Library Day, in conjunction with our Guest Reader Program. During the day, we have over 60 community readers join us to read. At night, each child is given a paper gold star to hang on their front doors if they and their families are reading together for a half hour, with a slip to be returned, signed by parent/guardian, stating that the family read together. The child is then given a starburst candy and bookmark to thank them for encouraging family reading.

Reading surveys are a yearly activity, tied either to Children's Book Week or National Library Day. Surveys asking a book related question are sent home with spaces for each child and two adults to answer. Past questions include, "If you were abducted by aliens, what one book would you take along?", "What is the best book you have read this year?", and "What is your favorite children's book?" Survey responses are compiled, printed, and distributed for all to enjoy.

Thankful feathers is a program developed to bring people into the library. In early November, we announce that the library has a naked turkey, and that with cold weather approaching, it needs some feathers. We distribute paper feathers with spaces for name and "thankful for" printed on them. The whole school gets involved in filling out and hanging feathers on our naked bird. While in the library to hang feathers, we encourage books signouts.

Special staff displays are done in our main hallway with items the staff brings to the library. This year one display done is, "We have spent most of our lives in school!" Every staff member brought in a picture of themselves in school. Pictures were placed in "rooms" on a huge map of the school along with staff member's name, childhood school, and interests.

Monthly breakfasts for staff are held in the library. I have staff members rotate bringing in baked goods and provide beverages. This gets our staff into the room to see our collection.

Off the wall literature is a 3-D mural program done in conjunction with the art department. Every two years, students in seventh grade select a piece or group of literature, research it, and learn artistic skills in a specific medium. They then design and create 3-D murals of the literature selected on the walls of the library. Some of our creations include Jack climbing into the clouds on a huge beanstalk, Aladdin's castle, an African-American Rapunzel with beaded locks hanging down, the Secret Garden complete with plants, flowers, and stuffed figures, James and his friends on their peach.

Start With a Story involves reading a picture book to classes about to begin new units in science, social studies, or literature. The picture book addresses the new unit topic, e.g. Dandelions to begin a prairie life unit, Terrible Things to begin a Holocaust unit, or A Few Thoughts on Trout to introduce ecology units.

None of these projects requires materials that are not already part of the school budget. They are enormously replicable by any librarian with the time and desire to do so. I have presented them at conferences and had librarians visit to see and "borrow" them. They each take an old idea and give it new life, giving new life to my library program as well. By designing activities to bring children and staff into the media center, our circulation has increased dramatically. We truly are a school full of readers!

2. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses and how they were identified. List the *Core Curriculum Content and Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards* addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses the standard(s).

A true lover of books, I was desperate to get more of “my” wonderful books into the hands of potential readers. We had seen a tremendous increase in circulation after the creation of our Guest Reader Program, but I greedily wanted more. I felt that the more that people entered the library, the better my chances for exposing them to the exciting books in my collection. Our students and staff were reading more every year, as evidenced by the increases shown in circulation yearly, we felt a direct result of our Guest Reader Program. At the same time, our school reading scores were on an upward trend, and we wanted to continue to improve. This indicated to me that library outreach programs could make a significant difference in creating a reading environment within the school. By getting children and staff excited about reading and books, we could impact not only circulation but reading scores as well.

Specific *Core Curriculum Content Standards* addressed by library outreach programs include: **3.4 – Students will read various materials and texts with comprehension and critical analysis, 3.2 Students will listen actively in a variety of situations to information from a variety of sources.** All students in our building are involved in these programs, so they definitely reach every student. Children are not only reading more via these programs, but are being read to by adults more often, increasing listening skills. By improving reading skills, student self-esteem is increased, and responsibility is taught by increasing the number of books children are responsible for checking out and returning. Read Around the Building, Family Reading Night, and Reading Surveys all generate an increase in circulation and reading improvement as students and staff need books to participate. The thankful feathers, staff displays, and breakfasts bring people into the library, where we can nab them and “sell” them on various books and materials. These projects are highly motivating to our children and staff who all actively participate in them. Displays involve *Standards 6.5 Students will acquire historical understanding of varying cultures...6.4 ...of societal ideas forces ..., 6.3 ...of political and diplomatic ideas, forces, institutions, 6.2 Students will learn democratic citizenship through the humanities. .. in social studies and 7.2 Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of interrelationship between language and culture... in foreign language areas.* Special displays have included decade celebrations, with staff members bringing in pictures and clothing from specified decades, and speakers coming in to talk to children about life in those times; reading in other cultures, with the word “read” in 20 languages attached to books from those cultures and guests reading to children in various languages and discussing life in other lands. Children also listen to and discuss tales from other lands, and similarities and differences in stories from various cultures. Our Off the Wall Literature program addresses *Standards 1.6 Students will develop design skills for planning form and function of space..., 1.3 Students will utilize arts elements and arts media to produce...1.1 Students will acquire knowledge and skills that increase awareness...in the arts, and 4.16, 4.14, 4.13, 4.9, 4.7, 4.3 in mathematics.* As students read and research the literature they have selected to visually depict, they are also addressing the Language Arts areas above, and are demonstrating **cross-content** area skills. This program truly brings the written word to life in stunning visual color, form, and texture. A wide variety of art media are used to create our eye-catching murals, including, gesso, paint, glitter, numerous fabrics, pottery, clay, beads, yarn, braid, etc. Students not only paint, draw, design, staple, deal with spatial issues, but also learn how to connect material to walls, sew, stuff, and more. This program truly demonstrates cross-content collaboration, combining literature, art, math, and consumer sciences to create incredible visual images representing written word. These additions to our library have been “checked out” by every visitor to our school and make our room a warm, inviting place in which to spend time.

All of these programs reach out to every student, staff member, and visitor to our building. Through the students, parents become involved as well. Our school truly is full of readers. By providing quality reading material, and marketing it in a positive, exciting way, we have made the library a center of learning for our school and increased library circulation, thereby positively impacting student reading abilities.

3. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met.

To assess the success of our outreach programs, we examined circulation statistics and standardized test reading scores of our middle school students. We compared these results from the years 1995/96 and 1997/98 for library statistics, and 1995/96 and 1996/97, the last year available, for reading scores.

In 1994/95, our overall reading score on the Early Warning Test was 58.2% of students achieving at Level I. By the 1996/97 school year, this figure had increased to 64.4% of all students tested achieving at Level I. This certainly represents a significant increase in reading comprehension, language mechanics, and reading ability. As students read more, and are exposed to quality literature, reading scores rise. Were our students reading more?

Our circulation figures for the 1995/96 school year were 22761 materials circulated. In 1997/98, we circulated 27,533 library materials, and our collection had grown to 32,311 materials. Our students were reading significantly more than in 1995/96, with circulation increased by 4772 more materials checked out! So, reading scores were up, with students reading dramatically more material. It appears to us that there is a direct correlation between these two figures, and we feel that circulation increased because of our outreach programs.

By bringing people into the library, taking books into the classrooms, and making the library the center of fun activities for the school, we have succeeded in promoting books, love of literature, and the importance and fun of reading to every segment of our school community.

In summary:

- a. Our student reading scores rose by 6.2 %.
- b. Our library circulation rose by roughly 20%.
- c. Students and staff demonstrate a greater appreciation for literature, coming in to ask for materials "like the one you read to us" or "that could tell me a story about rocks."
- d. Our community expects us to be a school full of readers. They ask in advance about Guest Reader day, reading surveys, Read Around the Building themes, special displays, and other programs run by the library.
- e. Students demonstrate an interest in other cultures and languages. Periodically, we display banners with a word, e.g., "welcome," in numerous languages, and the children eagerly try to guess what the word is. Our students are always excited about visitors who can share experiences about life in other lands and displays of objects from different cultures.
- f. Children love the mural project. They anxiously anticipate what the next mural topic will be, and ask if they will be part of the next group creating murals. The stories highlighted by our murals are always among our "bestsellers" as the walls are advertisements for those stories. The colors and figures and their incredible backgrounds truly make the library a more welcoming and friendly place. The art teachers state that children have a unique opportunity to not only learn specific art skills, but to incorporate them into a large-scale project, deal with spatial problems, calculate out measurements to scale, and master related techniques they would not normally achieve in the traditional art class setting.
- g. The fact that other schools are interested in replicating these programs is a strong indication that they are indeed successful.
- h. Our library circulation figures for the current school year are already exceeding those of last year! If we continue on our current course, we will be close to 30,000 materials circulating at the end of this year!

WE ARE A SCHOOL FULL OF READERS!